

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4.9	VISUAL RESOURCES, LIGHT AND GLARE	1
	Introduction	1
	Impacts Evaluated in Other Sections	1
	Affected Environment (Setting)	1
	Regional Visual Character	1
	Scenic Highways	2
	Scenic Vistas	2
	Visual Resources Goals, Objectives, and Policies	2
	Evaluation Criteria with Points of Significance	3
	Methodology	4
	Environmental Consequences (Impacts) and Recommended Mitigation Measures	5
	Cumulative Impacts	8

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.9-1	Summary of General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies - Visual Resources	2
Table 4.9-2	Evaluation Criteria with Point of Significance - Visual Resources	4
Table 4.9-3	Visual Resources	5

4.9 VISUAL RESOURCES, LIGHT AND GLARE

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the impacts of the project changes on visual resources related to visual contrast, view obstruction, or loss of rural character. The section also addresses degradation in visual quality resulting from loss or alteration of a specific scenic resource (such as mature stands of native trees) or introduction of a new source of high intensity light or glare. To provide a basis for this evaluation, the setting section describes the regional landscape character and the existing visual conditions of the Project area. Potentially sensitive viewpoints are identified, along with scenic routes and other resources designated as scenic in local general plans.

IMPACTS EVALUATED IN OTHER SECTIONS

All items related to the Visual Resources Section are evaluated in this section of this document.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT (SETTING)

The following section provides a general discussion of the landscape character of the Project area, addresses the applicable plans and policies governing preservation of visual resources, and provides a description of the existing visual conditions of the project area.

Regional Visual Character

San Joaquin County is located in California's Central Valley. The primary land use in the region and in the project area is agricultural. The White Slough Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) is located adjacent to the project site on the west side of Interstate 5. The WPCP is visible from all areas of the project site. Thornton Road borders the site to the east, turning north to parallel I-5 at the northern boundary. Less than one half mile to the northwest of the I-5 and Thornton Road convergence is the State Route 12 overpass. Telephone lines and property fences border the site along the roadways. One residence is located along the east side of Thornton Road and one commercial structure is located along the west side of Thornton Road, both in the vicinity of the southwest corner of the project site. With the exception of the WPCP facility, there are no other structures within or adjacent to the project area. High power transmission lines and the California Aqueduct parallel I-5 within one-quarter and one-half mile (respectively) to the west of the WPCP.

Existing light sources near the site are confined to indoor lights, entry lights, and security lights at the WPCP, as well as at the residence and commercial structure near the southwest

corner of the project site. The commercial development to the north, at the I-5/SR 12 interchange, is another source of light in the area with indoor and outdoor night lighting. No street lighting exists along I-5 or Thornton Road.

Scenic Highways

None of the roads or highways are formally designated as scenic highways by the state of California, or the Cities of Lodi and Stockton within or adjacent to the project area. San Joaquin County has designated I-5 as a scenic route due to its agricultural/rural value.

Scenic Vistas

No scenic vistas are formally designated by San Joaquin County or the City of Lodi within the project area. However, the rural landscape of the agricultural fields serves as a defining regional and local characteristic, which the cities wish to uphold. This scenic value creates an historic bond between the past and present and celebrates those activities that formed and shaped the community into its present state. Therefore, the agriculture setting is considered a valuable scenic view, particularly from major roadways.

VISUAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

Table 4.9-1 identifies goals, objectives, and policies that provide guidance for development in relation to visual resources in the Project area. The table also indicates which criteria in the Visual Resources Section are responsive to each set of policies.

Table 4.9-1

Summary of General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies - Visual Resources

Adopted Plan Document	Document Section	Document Numeric Reference	Policy	Relevant Evaluation Criteria ¹
San Joaquin County General Plan	Community Organization and Development Pattern	Commercial Development Policies 11 & 13	Landscaping shall be required for all new commercial development. Comprehensive or integrated master sign plans for significant Freeway Service Commercial areas shall be encouraged through the adoption of Special Purpose Plans.	2, 3, & 4
San Joaquin County General Plan	Public Facilities	Recreation Policy 23	Scenic corridors along recreation travelways and scenic routes shall be protected from unsightly development.	1 & 3

Table 4.9-1

Summary of General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies -
Visual Resources

Adopted Plan Document	Document Section	Document Numeric Reference	Policy	Relevant Evaluation Criteria ¹
San Joaquin County General Plan	Resources	Open Space Policies 10, 11, & 13	Views of waterways, hilltops, and oak groves from public land and public roadways shall be protected. Outstanding scenic vistas shall be preserved and public access provided to them whenever possible. Development proposals along scenic routes shall not detract from the visual and recreational experience.	1, 3, & 4
Lodi General Plan	Urban Design and Cultural Resources	Rural and Agricultural Lands	The rural and agricultural lands surrounding Lodi constitute an important scenic resource that helps to visually define and enhance the City.	1, 3, & 4
Stockton General Plan	Land Use	Commercial Land Use Goal 1, Policy 8	Signing in commercial development shall be planned to complement rather than detract from its overall design or the design of its surrounding environment.	2
Stockton General Plan	Land Use	Mixed Use Land Uses Goal 1, Policy 4c	Establish sign standards in commercial areas that provide for identification and advertisement while reducing visual clutter and potential traffic hazards.	2

Source: Parsons, 2001

¹The evaluation criteria are in Table 4.9-2.

EVALUATION CRITERIA WITH POINTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

While degrees of visual changes and exposure can be objectively described, evaluation of impacts involve a subjective element reflected in the viewer response. The CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G) provide criteria of significance for Aesthetics, which have been used here in addition to project specific criteria to evaluate project effects on visual resources.

The project may have a significant impact on existing visual resources and the aesthetic quality of the project site if it results in any of the following:

Table 4.9-2

Evaluation Criteria with Point of Significance - Visual Resources

Evaluation Criteria	As Measured by	Point of Significance	Justification
1. Will the project be inconsistent with City and County general plans regarding scenic routes, approaches, or highways?	Degradation of visual resource	Greater than 0 inconsistencies	San Joaquin County, Lodi, Stockton, and Manteca General Plans CEQA Appendix G
2. Will the project be inconsistent with state and local policies concerning signage?	Inappropriate signage	Greater than 0 inconsistencies	San Joaquin County, Lodi, Stockton, and Manteca General Plans
3. Will the project cause a substantial adverse effect on foreground or middleground views from a high volume travelway or private residence, or significantly alter public views?	Obstruction of view	Strong visual contrast*	Principles of visual management CEQA Appendix G
4. Will the project create a high intensity light source or glare affecting private residences, passing pedestrians, or motorists?	Introduction of high intensity light or glare	Greater than 0 residences, pedestrians, or motorists affected	CEQA Appendix G

Source: Parsons, 2001

*Strong visual contrast includes one or more of the following: regraded land forms are flat with little to no contour; line of major ridgeline is altered and not consistent with surrounding ridgelines or minor ridgelines are eliminated; inconsistent color with adjacent landscape character; elimination of landscape texture created by exposed soil or removal of vegetation; form of project grossly exceeds scale of natural land forms

METHODOLOGY

Visual impacts are generally assessed by estimating the amount of visual changes introduced by Project components, the degree to which visual changes may be visible to viewers, and the general sensitivity of viewers to landscape alterations.

Visual changes are usually measured by three factors: the amount of visual contrast that Project components create (changes to form, line, color, texture, and scale in the landscape), the amount of view obstruction (loss of view) that occurs, and degradation of specific scenic resources (removal of scenic tree groves, etc.).

The baseline conditions were assessed based on review of Project maps, site photos, textual descriptions, and aerial photos.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (IMPACTS) AND RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES

Table 4.9-3

Visual Resources

Evaluation Criteria	As Measured by	Point of Significance	Impact	Type of Impact ¹	Level of Significance ²
1. Will the project be inconsistent with City and County general plans regarding scenic routes, approaches, or highways?	Degradation of visual resource	Greater than 0 inconsistencies	Low	C&P	○
2. Will the project be inconsistent with state and local policies concerning signage?	Inappropriate signage	Greater than 0 inconsistencies	Medium	C&P	○
3. Will the project cause a substantial adverse effect on foreground or middleground views from a high volume travelway or private residence, or significantly alter public views?	Obstruction of view	Strong visual contrast*	High	C&P	●
4. Will the project create a high intensity light source or glare affecting private residences, passing pedestrians, or motorists?	Introduction of high intensity light or glare	Greater than 0 residences, pedestrians, or motorists affected	Medium to High	C&P	●

Source: Parsons, 2001

Notes:	1. Type of Impact:	2. Level of Significance:
C:	Construction	● Significant impact before and after mitigation
P:	Permanent	⊙ Significant impact before mitigation; less than significant impact after mitigation
		○ Less than significant impact; no mitigation proposed
		= No impact

* Strong visual contrast includes one or more of the following: regraded land forms are flat with little to no contour; line of major ridgeline is altered and not consistent with surrounding ridgelines or minor ridgelines are eliminated; inconsistent color with adjacent landscape character; elimination of landscape texture created by exposed soil or removal of vegetation; form of project grossly exceeds scale of natural land forms.

IMPACT: 4.9-1 Will the project be inconsistent with City and County general plans regarding scenic routes, approaches, or highways?

Analysis: *Less than Significant; All Alternatives*

No scenic routes, approaches, or highways have been identified by the state of California, City of Lodi, Stockton, or Manteca within or adjacent to the project area. However, San Joaquin County has identified I-5 as a scenic route due to its agricultural/rural value. The project is landscaped along the route as required by the San Joaquin County General Plan (VI-8). Therefore, the project does not conflict with the General Plan and results in a less than significant impact.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

IMPACT: 4.9-2 Is the project inconsistent with state and local policies concerning signage?

Analysis: *No Impact; No Project*

The No Project alternative would not result in the addition of signage to the preferred project site. No inconsistencies with state and local policies concerning signage would occur.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Analysis: *Less than Significant Impact; Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only*

The existing visual character of the site and surrounding area is of an agricultural landscape. Existing signage is confined to road markers on I-5 and Thornton Road, and identification signs at the WPCP facilities. The Alternate Site is located in an area of mixed residential and business park uses. Although there is some signage in the area for the commercial land uses, residential areas are also adjacent.

Upon completion of the project, signage will be erected to advertise facilities to patrons and passing motorists and to direct automobiles to various components of the project. Signage will be designed, located, and installed in conformance with State of California, San Joaquin County, and City of Lodi, and Stockton general plan policies regarding the display of signage. Adherence to state and local policies regarding the display of signage will reduce this impact to less than significant.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

IMPACT: 4.9-3 Will the project cause a substantial adverse effect on foreground or middleground views from a high volume travelway or private residence, or will it cause a significant alteration of public views ?

Analysis: *No Impact; No Project*

The No Project alternative would allow the proposed site to be maintained as an agricultural area. There are no impacts associated with this alternative.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Analysis: *Significant Impact; Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only*

The existing visual character of the site and surrounding area is of an agricultural landscape. I-5, Thornton Road, and the WPCP facility comprise the dominant physical features immediately adjacent to the site. In addition, large-scale agricultural structures, rural-farming residences, high-power transmission lines, the California Aqueduct, and the Kingdon Airpark are located within a one-mile radius of the project site. The Alternate Site in Manteca is also near high volume travelways including State Route 120, Yosemite Avenue, and McKinley Avenue. In addition, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks and easement area form the northwestern edge of the alternate site.

Construction of the Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only alternatives will alter the agricultural setting with the introduction of large, multi-story buildings, including the hotel and dormitory. The large athletic facilities, such as the outdoor stadium, an aquatic center, and a 65,000 square foot indoor basketball/volleyball facility, will also be visible features of the development. The construction of these structures constitutes a significant and unavoidable impact to the existing visual (i.e., agricultural) character of the site.

Mitigation: **4.9-3 Visual Quality**

No feasible mitigation measures exist to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. However, the impact can be "softened" through the use of project design features. As required by the Lodi and San Joaquin County General Plans, a landscaped buffer and berm system shall be provided around the facilities to minimize direct views. The facilities should also be constructed using materials and colors representative of the existing landscape and visual character. Provision of landscaped buffers would reduce this impact, but to a less than significant level.

After

Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable; Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only*

IMPACT: 4.9-4 Will the project create a high intensity light source or glare affecting private residences, passing pedestrians, or motorists?

Analysis: *No Impact; No Project*

The No Project alternative would result in no alteration to the project site, and therefore, no installation of light sources. There are no impacts associated with this alternative.

Mitigation: No mitigation is required.

Analysis: *Significant Impact; Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only*

Existing light sources at the project site are confined to interior, exterior, and security lights at the WPCP, as well as at the residential and commercial structures on Thornton Road at the south end of the project area. The alternate site is also surrounded by residential light to the east and light from the business park to the south. Installation of low-intensity lighting in proximity to the hotel, dormitory, retail stores, RV park, and parking areas as well as nighttime lighting of the outdoor stadium, have the potential to increase nighttime light and glare of both the project site and adjacent parcels.

Construction of the Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only alternatives will alter the visual character of an unlighted agricultural field by the introduction of exterior security lighting throughout the Sports Complex as well as field lighting for night games on the outdoor fields. This impact is considered to be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation: **4.9-4 Lighting and Glare**

Lighting fixtures shall be cast downward or made of materials that minimize glare and disturbance to adjacent land uses. In addition, landscaping shall be installed to diminish light and glare effects on adjacent parcels and passing motorists. Use of downcast lighting fixtures and landscaping would reduce this impact, but not to a less than significant level.

After

Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable; Project, Alternate Site, and Sports Use Only*

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative development in the Project area would further urbanize the rural environment, reduce the amount of agricultural land, and increase the amount of ambient lighting in the area. The Project would further fragment the existing agricultural environment.

It is important to recognize the policies of the County and City of Lodi to ascertain the degree of impact to the visual character of the area. The San Joaquin County General Plan

discourages strip development along freeways in agricultural areas (page VI-13). The City General Plan encourages the preservation of agricultural land surrounding the City, supports the continuation of agricultural uses on lands designated for urban uses until urban development is imminent, and encourages San Joaquin County to retain agricultural uses on lands adjacent to the City (page 3-5). Therefore, the project, in combination with the other projects along I-5 and Highway 12 near the edge of the City within agricultural areas, will result in a significant and unavoidable impact to the visual character of the area. Since these projects are visible from highly traveled roadways, their impact is particularly noticeable to the local community and people passing through the area. Although large expanses of agricultural uses still exist to provide a rural agricultural visual character, the grouping of these projects disrupts the agricultural character and scenic quality of views from these major roadways.